

Amendments to the Specification (other than claims):

Please replace paragraph [0001] with the following amended paragraph:

[0001] The present invention relates to ceramic composites having superior mechanical characteristics in a room-temperature to ~~medium/low-temperature~~ medium/high-temperature range, employed as high wear resistance/low-friction ceramic materials in applications including diverse structural components, machining tools, sliding components, and mold-die materials; the invention also relates to methods of manufacturing such composites.

Please replace paragraph [0027] with the following amended paragraph:

[0027] After grinding and lapping operations on the obtained ceramic composites were implemented, average-crystal-grain-size, open-porosity, and bending-strength evaluations of the composites were carried out. Then, to ascertain the mold releasability in die-molding optical glass, an evaluation was conducted using borosilicate glass (Pyrex). In the evaluation method, the present ceramic composites were cut into 20-mm gauge lengths and then superficially lap-polished to a surface roughness of 0.02 μm (Ra), and used as molds to press 10-mm gauge lengths of the foregoing borosilicate glass (Pyrex) 60 seconds under 720°C molding-temperature, 10 MPa molding-pressure conditions. Carrying out 100 glass-molding test runs, a mold-releasability evaluation with the following content was conducted. Initially, after the molding operation was finished, the borosilicate glass (Pyrex) was parted from

the dies without applying external force, and then in examining the external appearance of the borosilicate glass (Pyrex), those items without chips, cracks, or clouding, and in which the roughness in the post-molding transfer surface of the borosilicate glass (Pyrex) was 0.03 μm or less (Ra) were judged acceptable. The mold releasability (%) was defined as the percentage numerical value in which the number of passing items was divided by the number of molding test runs. For example, if in 100 molding test runs 50 passing items were obtained, then the mold releasability would be 50%. The results of the releasability evaluation are set forth in Table IV.

Table IV

Test No.	Graphite qty. (wt. %)	Open porosity (%)	Avg. grain size (μm)	Bending Strength (MPa)	Releasability from borosilicate glass (Pyrex) (%)
2-1*	1	2.3	4.7	1120	18
2-2	2	0.8	2.8	1100	59
2-3	20	0.3	2.1	918	97
2-4	40	0.2	1.7	717	100
2-5	70	0.3	1.9	414	100
2-6	98	0.9	2.6	112	91
2-7*	99	did not sinter	did not sinter	did not sinter	did not sinter

Borosilicate glass (Pyrex) releasability test: Pressed 60 s under 720°C/10 MPa
pressuring conditions
Test-run count $n = 100$